

ICCJ Book Café



A project of the



Bella M. and Harry Richter Memorial Library

2014-2015 PROGRAM

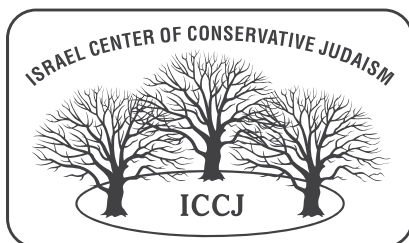
The ICCJ Book Café is delighted to announce the books we will be discussing for the upcoming year, and our guest authors and other synagogue programs as well.

This year, the ICCJ Book Café will present, for the first time, **The ICCJ Cinema Café**, to enhance the Israel theme. All book discussions will take place on Sunday mornings at 10:00 AM, with a light breakfast followed by the program.

The fee for each of those program is \$5.00.

The ICCJ Cinema Café will take place on Thursday evenings following minyan.

There will be no charge for the ICCJ Cinema Café.



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Our theme for this year is “The Place of Israel in Our Lives”

Sunday, Oct. 19, 2014, 10:00 am

“Only Yesterday, a novel” by Shmuel Yosef (Shai) Agnon

The Book

The book tells a seemingly simple tale about a man who immigrates to Palestine with the Second Aliya--the several hundred idealists who returned between 1904 and 1914 to work the Hebrew soil as in Biblical times and revive Hebrew culture. Seduced by Zionist slogans, young Isaac Kumer imagines the Land of Israel filled with the financial, social, and erotic opportunities that were denied him, the son of an impoverished shopkeeper, in Poland. Once there, he cannot find the agricultural work he anticipated. Instead, Isaac happens upon house-painting jobs as he moves from secular, Zionist Jaffa, where the ideological fervor and sexual freedom are alien to him, to ultra-orthodox, anti-Zionist Jerusalem. While some of his Zionist friends turn capitalist, becoming successful merchants, his own life remains adrift and impoverished in a land torn between idealism and practicality, a place that is at once homeland and Diaspora.



The Author

S.Y. (Shai) Agnon was a Nobel Prize laureate writer and was one of the central figures of modern Hebrew fiction. Agnon was born in Buczacz, Galicia, Austro-Hungarian Empire (today Ukraine). He did not attend school and was schooled by his parents. In addition to studying Jewish texts, Agnon studied writings of the Haskalah, and was also tutored in German. At the age of eight, he began to write in Hebrew and Yiddish. He later immigrated to the British Mandate of Palestine, and died in 1970 in Jerusalem, Israel. His works deal with the conflict between the traditional Jewish life and language and the modern world. Twice awarded the Bialik Prize and the Israel Prize, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1966 “for his profoundly characteristic narrative art with motifs from the life of the Jewish people.”



Thursday, November 13, 2014, 8:00 pm

ICCCJ Cinema Café—“The True Story of Palestine”

Our first film of year is a fine complement to the Agnon book as it takes a comic look at the rebirth of Israel, narrated by Topol and written by Haim Hefer. The film is by Nathan Axelrod, Uri Zohar and Yoel Zilberg. Using old newsreels, we get a glimpse at what Israel looked like in the early 1900's and how it came to be the country it is now. (65 minutes, in Hebrew with English subtitles.)



Sunday, December 21, 2014, 10:00 am
“Between Friends” by Amos Oz

The Book

In *Between Friends*, Amos Oz returns to the kibbutz of the late 1950s, the time and place where his writing began. These eight interconnected stories, set in the fictitious Kibbutz Yekhat, are profiles of idealistic men and women enduring personal hardships in the shadow of one of the greatest collective dreams of the twentieth century, the kibbutz. A devoted father who fails to challenge his daughter's lover, an old friend, a man his own age; an elderly gardener who carries on his shoulders the sorrows of the world; a woman writing perversely poignant letters to her husband's mistress. Each of these stories depict an idea and a period, crucial to our understanding of Israel.



The Author

Oz was born Amos Klausner on May 4, 1939, in Jerusalem. After his mother's suicide, Oz left Jerusalem at age 14, became a Labor Zionist, and joined Kibbutz Hulda. He changed his name to “Oz” (meaning strength). After concluding his army service he was sent by his kibbutz to the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, where he studied philosophy and Hebrew literature. He graduated in 1963 and began work as a teacher of literature and philosophy. He subsequently served with a tank unit in the Sinai Peninsula during the Six-Day War and in the Golan Heights during the War. In 1986, he left Kibbutz Hulda with his wife and three children and moved to Arad due to his son's asthma. Oz is considered a prominent Israeli writer, novelist, journalist and intellectual. He is also a professor of literature at Ben-Gurion University in Beersheba. His work has been published in 42 languages, including Arabic, in 43 countries. He has received many honors and awards, among them the Legion of Honour of France, the Goethe Prize, the Prince of Asturias Award in Literature, the Heinrich Heine Prize and the Israel Prize. In 2007, a selection from the Chinese translation of *A Tale of Love and Darkness* was the first work of modern Hebrew literature to appear in an official Chinese textbook.



Thursday, January 15, 2015, 8:00 pm
ICCCJ Cinema Café—“Noodle”

When the Chinese woman working in Israel for an Israeli flight attendant, Miri, is suddenly deported for overstaying her work visa, her lack of Hebrew-language skills makes it impossible for her to convince the Israeli authorities that she has a young child with her. The flight attendant, twice-widowed because of the ongoing Arab-Israeli wars, has been going through the motions of living, somehow detached from a real connection to life itself. Her decision to help reunite the child—nicknamed



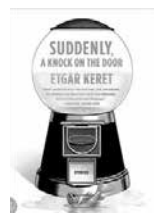
“Noodle”—with his mother, now back in Beijing, ends up helping her, not just the boy and his mother, in ways Miri herself could not have expected. (1 hour, 37 min., in Hebrew with English subtitles.)

Sunday, February 15, 2015, 10:00 am

“Suddenly a Knock on the Door, Stories” by Etgar Keret

The Book

Bringing up a child, lying to the boss, placing an order in a fast-food restaurant are scenarios in Keret’s new short story collection. He presents daily life as complicated, dangerous, and full of yearning. This collection depicts how the living and the dead, silent children and talking animals, dreams and waking life coexist in an uneasy world. His stories are overflowing with absurdity, humor, sadness, and compassion. The New York Times expresses the essence of his work as follows “Keret tracks the chaotic inner life of his countrymen. To him, the perils of modern Israel — the free-floating rage, the anguish of occupation, the sudden and senseless violence — is not national dramas so much as existential dilemmas.” These stories open a window into modern Israeli from the vantage point of one of its leading young authors.



The Author

Keret was born in Ramat Gan, Israel in 1967. He is a third child to parents who survived the Holocaust. He lives in Tel Aviv with his wife, Shira Geffen, and their son, Lev. He is a lecturer at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in Beer Sheva, and at Tel Aviv University. Keret’s first published work was *Pipelines* (Tzinorot, 1992), a collection of short stories which was largely ignored when it came out. His second book, *Missing Kissinger* (Ga’agu’ai le-Kissinger, 1994), a collection of fifty very short stories, caught the attention of the general public. In 1998, Keret published *Kneller’s Happy Campers* (Hakaytana Shel Kneller), a collection of short stories. The title story, follows a young man who commits suicide and goes on a quest for love in the afterlife. It appears in the English language collection of Keret’s stories *The Bus Driver Who Wanted To Be God & Other Stories* (2004) and was adapted into the graphic novel *Pizzeria Kamiqaze* (2006), with illustrations by Asaf Hanuka. Keret’s latest short story collections are *Anihu* (literally I-am-him, 2002; translated into English as *Cheap Moon*, after one of the other stories in the collection) and *Pitom Defikah Ba-delet* (translated into English as *Suddenly a Knock at the Door*). Keret also wrote a children’s book, *Dad Runs Away with the Circus* (2004), illustrated by Rutu Modan. His work has influenced many writers of his generation as well as bringing a renewed surge in popularity for the short story form in Israel in the second half of the 1990s. Keret has received the Prime Minister’s award for literature, as well as the Ministry of Culture’s Cinema Prize. In 2006 he was chosen as an outstanding artist of the prestigious Israel Cultural Excellence Foundation.



Thursday, March 26, 2015, 8:00 pm
ICCCJ Cinema Café—"Footnote"

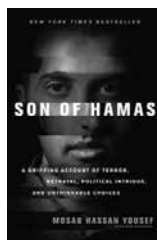


This is a tale of a great rivalry between a father and son, two eccentric professors, who have both dedicated their lives to work in Talmudic Studies. The father, a stubborn purist, has never been recognized for his work. The son is an up and coming star in the field. One day the tables turn and the father learns he is to be awarded the prestigious Israel Prize. But in a darkly funny twist, each will come to terms with the reality of recognition and career advancement in an unexpected way.

Sunday, April 19, 2015, 10:00 am
"Son of Hamas" by Mosab Hassan Yousef

The Book

This is the autobiography of 32-year-old Mosab Hassan Yousef, the eldest son of Hamas cofounder Sheikh Hassan Yousef. As a child, he was a stone-throwing participant in the first intifada, the Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation in the early 1990s. Although Mosab had a tender relationship with his father, Mosab himself is nearly consumed with hatred fed by the bitter frustration of life under Israeli occupation. When he gets hauled into Israeli prison on the suspicion that he is preparing a terrorist attack, Mosab strikes a deal with an Israeli intelligence agent and becomes an informant, a move he sees as a way to get out of prison sooner. While things don't work out as pleasantly in the near term as Mosab might have liked, his departure begins a sort of slow unraveling. His feeling of powerlessness at the senseless death around him pushes into deeper and deeper connections with his new Israeli colleagues. Mosab reveals new information about the world's most dangerous terrorist organization and unveils the truth about his own role, his agonizing separation from family and homeland, the dangerous decision to make his newfound Christian faith public, and his belief that the Christian mandate to "love your enemies" is the only way to peace in the Middle East.



The Author

Mosab Hassan Yousef was born in 1978 in Ramallah. His father, Sheikh Hassan Yousef, was a Hamas founder and leader who spent many years in Israeli prisons. He is the oldest of five brothers and three sisters. [According to Yousef, when he was growing up he wanted to be a fighter because that was expected of Palestinian children in the West Bank. Yousef was first arrested when he was ten, during the First Intifada, for throwing rocks at Israeli settlers. He was further arrested and jailed by the Israelis numerous times. As his father's eldest son, he was seen as his heir apparent. Yousef claims that his doubts about Islam and Hamas began forming when he realized Hamas' brutality. Beginning with



his release from prison in 1997, Yousef was considered the Shin Bet's most reliable source in the Hamas leadership, earning himself the nickname the "Green Prince"—using the color of the Islamist group's flag, and "prince" because of his pedigree as the son of one of the movement's founders. The intelligence he supplied to Israel led to the exposure of a number of Hamas cells as well as the prevention of dozens of suicide bombings and assassination attempts on Israeli figures.

Thursday, April 23, 2015, 8:00 pm

**Joint Library Sisterhood Program featuring George Robinson,
Film Critic, The Jewish Week—"A New Wave in Israeli Film"**



Israeli film makers have turned their attention away from the Middle East conflict and examine equally vital questions about what it means to be Israeli.

Mr. Robinson will discuss and show clips from recent Israeli releases to illustrate these developments.

Friday and Saturday, April 24, 25, 2015

**Guest Author, Maggie Anton—"Enchantress," a novel of
Rav Hisda's Daughter**



Maggie Anton will speak about her latest book in the Rav Hisda series.

Always a delightful and lively speaker, she will discuss the research and the surprising things she learned along the way.

Thursday, May 21, 2015, 8:00 pm

ICCCJ Cinema Café—"The Other Son"



As he is preparing to join the Israeli army for his national service, Joseph discovers he is not his parents' biological son, and that he was inadvertently switched at birth with Yacine, the son of a Palestinian family from the West Bank. This revelation turns the lives of these two families upside-down, forcing them to reassess their respective identities, their values and their beliefs.

Sunday, June 14, 2015, 10:00 am

"Second Person Singular" by Sayed Kashua

The Book

Second Person Singular follows two men, a successful Arab criminal attorney, and a social worker-turned-artist, whose lives intersect under the most curious of circumstances. The lawyer has a thriving practice in the Jewish part of Jerusalem, a large house, a Mercedes, speaks both Arabic and Hebrew, and is in love with his wife and two young children. In an effort to uphold his image as a sophisticated Israeli Arab, he often makes weekly visits to a local bookstore to pick up popular novels. On one fateful evening, he decides to buy a used copy of Tolstoy's *The Kreutzer Sonata*, a book his wife once recom-



mended. To his surprise, inside he finds a small white note, a love letter, in Arabic, in her handwriting. “I waited for you, but you didn’t come. I hope everything’s all right. I wanted to thank you for last night. It was wonderful. Call me tomorrow?”

Consumed with suspicion and jealousy, the lawyer slips into a blind rage over the presumed betrayal. He first considers murder, revenge, then divorce, but when the initial sting of humiliation and hurt dissipates, he decides to hunt for the book’s previous owner—a man named Yonatan, a man who is not easy to track down, whose identity is more complex than imagined, and whose life is more closely aligned with his own than expected. In the process of dredging up old ghosts and secrets, the lawyer tears the string that holds all of their lives together. This tale of love and betrayal, honesty and artifice, asks whether it is possible to truly reinvent ourselves, to shed our old skin and start anew, a fundamental question for Israel and its neighbors.

The Author

An Israeli-Arab author and journalist, Kashua was born in 1975 in Tira, Israel to parents of Palestinian descent. In 1990, he was accepted to a prestigious boarding school in Jerusalem, the Israel Arts and Science Academy. He studied sociology and philosophy at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Kashua was a resident of Beit Safafa before moving to a Jewish neighborhood of Jerusalem with his wife and children.

Kashua has accepted teaching positions in Chicago, Illinois, moving there with his wife and three children for the 2014/15 academic year. He will participate in the Creative Writing program’s bilingualism workshop at the University of Chicago and is a visiting scholar in the Israel Studies program at the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign. He is the writer behind *Avoda Aravit*, or in English, *Arab Labor*, a satirical sitcom aired on Israel’s Channel 2. A large part of the dialogue is in Arabic with Hebrew subtitles. The show is about a young Arab couple, Amjad and Bushra, and their young daughter, who live in an Arab village on the outskirts of Jerusalem. Amjad is a journalist working for a Hebrew newspaper who desperately seeks to assimilate into the prevailing Israeli Jewish cultural milieu with mixed and hilarious results. The show holds a mirror up to the racism and ignorance on both sides of the ethnic divide and has been compared with *All in the Family*.

In 2004, Kashua won the Prime Minister’s prize for literature. *Arab Labor* won the Award for Best Television Series at the Jerusalem Film Festival, and in 2011 he won the Bernstein Prize for his novel *Second Person Singular*.

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Arlene Ratzabi

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